

experience in foreign policy, in arms control issues, and vast experience in domestic policy. And maybe even more important than experience, the ideas that he's advanced have made America a better place. So if results counts and experience counts, then he has quite a good resume.

And I don't have to make comparative judgments about the other candidates to say that. No one has anything like that level of experience, with that level of positive impact on the people of our country. Those are just, I think, indisputable facts.

**Q.** How about one more?

**President Clinton.** You want to ask one more Egyptian? Equal time.

### **Middle East Peace Process**

**Q.** I have a question for President Mubarak and one for President Clinton. Sir, at this moment, Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak is forming his government in Israel. What should be, with so little time before the next American elections, which are just around the corner, what would be—

**President Clinton.** Seventeen months? [Laughter]

**Q.** What would be perhaps the one thing or one message you would direct towards Mr. Barak as a step that should be taken as soon as possible to revive the peace process?

And President Clinton, your comment on President Mubarak's statement?

**President Mubarak.** Is the question directed to me?

**Q.** Yes, first, Your Excellency.

**President Mubarak.** I think I have already mentioned that in the comments I started with there should be some steps to make that feel much far better and to start the peace process. Eighteen months is quite a lot; we could achieve in one year so many things. The peace process was already started years and years ago. The Palestinians have signed some agreements. If Mr. Barak—and I'm sure that he's going to do it—starts implementing the Wye agreement, for example, makes some steps for the settlements, I think the process will move. And we hope that we could finish or reach a final status in one year. One year and a half is quite a lot of time for negotiations.

**President Clinton.** I agree with that. It doesn't have anything to do with the time left I have on my term. My advice would be—let me go back to 1993 when I became President. Our biggest problem was the domestic economy was not doing well and we had a \$290 billion deficit, and there was no easy way to close it. And we presented an economic plan to the Congress that passed by only one vote in both Houses. It was very controversial; it was very difficult, I think in that sense, politically, internally, was perhaps more controversial than making—than in Israel going forward with the peace process maybe now, given the vote in the last election.

I think it's better, if you know you've got to do something without which you cannot succeed in serving your people in the long run, it's better to do it sooner rather than later—generally. That is generally true. And if it is going to be difficult and there are tough consequences, it's better to take them early rather than later. That is just a general rule. Because, otherwise, if you don't do it, you may never get around to doing it, but it won't get any better. It will just get worse and worse and worse.

So it's better to just take a deep breath and go on and do what you think has to be done. That's what I believe.

**Press Secretary Lockhart.** Thank you.

**President Clinton.** First—next question, I'll give you—next time we come, I'll give you the first one, after we do the roll. I've got to go. Thank you.

**President Mubarak.** Thank you very much.

**President Clinton.** Thank you.

NOTE: The President's 177th news conference began at 1:47 p.m. in Presidential Hall (formerly Room 450) in the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, President Clinton referred to Gov. George W. Bush of Texas; CNN senior White House correspondent Wolf Blitzer; President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; King Abdullah II of Jordan; outgoing Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel; and former Senator Bill Bradley. President Mubarak referred to President Hafiz al-Asad of Syria; and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. Both Presidents referred to Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak of Israel.

## Remarks on the Charters of Freedom Project

July 1, 1999

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. As you might imagine, this is a very special day for Hillary and for me, in a signal honor for us to have the chance to serve at this moment. I want to thank John Carlin for his faithful stewardship of these great documents; thank my friend Mike Armstrong for his generosity and for calling on others in the business community to help in this endeavor; thank Secretary Riley and NASA and the Department of Commerce for working with the National Archives in designing and developing the new encasement that will house our charters. I thank the Center for Civic Education for their efforts to teach our children the importance of history.

I'd like to thank these young people who are here who read—first they helped us recite the Pledge of Allegiance, and then they read from our founding documents. And I thought that young man did a remarkable job introducing Hillary. I thought they were all great. Let's give them a hand. *[Applause]*

And I would like to say a special word of appreciation to Congressman Ralph Regula for his leadership and for proving that this is one issue which is not a partisan issue. This is an American issue. And I'm very grateful to him for his leadership in the United States Congress on this.

On July 4, 1776, King George of England wrote in his diary, "Nothing of importance happened today." Now, even making allowances for the absence of world news and the Internet, His Majesty's diary entry stands as one of the more inaccurate statements ever written. *[Laughter]* We all know that those who put their names to the Declaration of Independence changed the world forever.

Before then, liberty had been a rare and fleeting thing in the course of human history. Citizens of ancient democracies enjoyed it but let it slip from their grasp. So the Founders labored mightily to craft a Declaration of Independence, then a Constitution and a Bill of Rights that they hoped would help America to beat the odds and keep liberty alive.

Two hundred and twenty-three years later we can safely say they succeeded not only in keeping the liberty they created, in fact, alive, but in moving ever closer, generation after generation, to the pure ideals embodied in the words they wrote.

Today, our liberty extends not just to white men with property but to all Americans. Our concept of freedom no longer includes the so-called freedom to keep slaves or extract profit from the labor of children. And our Constitution is the inspiration behind scores of democratic governments around the world, from Japan to Poland to Guatemala to South Africa.

Each generation of Americans is called upon not only to preserve that liberty but to enhance it; not only to protect the institutions that secure our liberty but to renew and reform them to meet the challenges of the present with an eye for the future. The renewal of our generation—in our economy, our social fabric, our world leadership for peace and freedom—is well symbolized by the project we celebrate today, employing the finest minds and latest technologies to preserve these charters of freedom for generations yet unborn.

When Hillary and I first realized that the turn of the millennium would occur while we were in the White House, we knew we had an obligation to mark it in ways that would be good for the country—in her words, "by honoring the past and imagining the future."

What we do with these hallowed pieces of parchment, all Americans can do with the important historical treasures that exist all around them, in their attics, their parks, their townhalls. Saving America's treasures is not about living in the past. It is about conveying to future generations the American story in all its texture and richness and detail, about fulfilling our duty to be good ancestors, about catching the spirit Thomas Jefferson had in his later years, when he became devoted to preserving desks and chairs and other ordinary things from his extraordinary times. "These small things," he wrote, "may perhaps, like the relics of Saints, help to nourish our devotion to this holy bond of Union and keep it longer alive and warm in our affections."